



Black and *Pink* Newsletter

SEPTEMBER 2010 ISSUE

BLACK AND PINK— NEWSLETTER, C/O COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON,
565 BOYLSTON ST, BOSTON, MA 02116

INSIDE

THIS

ISSUE:

Tweek's Story 2

Kitty Doesn't Tolerate Disrespect 3

Lost Life, Casualties of War 4

Make Black & Pink More & Accountable to YOU! 5 & 6

Black & Pink Mail-In Idea Form 7

California legislature passes bill protecting LGBT prisoners 8

QWOC + Week Events Success 9

Submissions, P2P project 10

Dear Friends,

September is upon us and the seasons are changing. The autumn equinox is just around the corner and those who celebrate the passing of the seasons will be honoring the wrapping up of the harvest time and taking account the great blessings of the summer crops. Autumn is considered a time of balance as the sunlight and night time are nearly equal as we move closer to the time of longer nights calling for more rest.



For our movement, September 9th marks the anniversary of an essential time in prisoner movement power, the Attica Rebellion. In 1971, responding to the murder of Black Panther prisoner George Jackson by a prison guard, nearly 1,000 prisoners seized control of the majority of the prison. The prisoners held control of the prison for four days, negotiating demands with the state authorities. "During the inmate occupation of, the prisoners held elections and set up an elaborate P.A. system so all the prisoners could hear. They would not move unless they all agreed. They slept on the ground while the hostages slept on mattresses. The hostages were given what little medication there was while the prisoners went without. It is well documented that they were treated well and protected by appointed inmate-guards from harm by other inmates. It is also true that on the 5th day, after still no progress was made on the issue of amnesty, the prisoners did take some hostages out on the catwalk with homemade knives to their throats. However, this was only after the water was shut off." (history as told by Assata Shakur)

Tragically Governor Rockefeller chose to send the National Guard in shooting, and they killed 39 people that day, including 11 employees of the prison. None of the demands that were made by the prisoners were met and the massacre at Attica still goes without apology by the New York government. That said it is still an incredible story of prisoner organizing and resistance. People stood up against the persecution they were experiencing as prisoners and said "NO!" to the violence of the system. The tragic ending may bring tears but the organizing of the prisoners must give us hope for our own capacity to build and strengthen our movement today.

During the Attica rebellion the prisoners created a list of demands for immediate changes necessary for the humanity of the prisoners being held at behind the walls in Attica. If you had to make a list of demands for your prison what would be on it? Is there actually freedom of religion where you are? Do they send in clergy who preach their understanding of God or are individual prisoners actually allowed to worship in a way that meets their spiritual needs? Are prisoners entitled to programs that better their personal lives? Are there working conditions that are safe where valuable skills can be learned and where prisoners are paid fair wages? Are you free from harassment by prison guards and other prison officials? What changes are needed in the immediate moment as we move forward towards abolishing the entire system? Send us your list of demands so we can create a list of what people who receive this newsletter think are needed and we can figure out where the overlapping issues are around the country. The needs and values of queer and transgender prisoners often go without recognition by those advocating for prisoners, thus we need to shape our own agenda that is more encompassing.

As we continue moving forward to transform this system we keep in mind that indeed, "once there were no prisons, that day will come again!"

Love and struggle,
Jason

Tweek's story

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

I pray all is well with you. A good friend shared the Black & Pink newsletter with me and told me I should write and inform you of my situation and my struggle. I am serving a 20 year aggravated sentence that I feel was unjust and placed on me not because I'm a criminal but because I am bi-sexual. I fell out of a small county that frowns on any type of "alternative lifestyle". Me and my few friends use to go to this club, and over time there have been muggings, police beatings, arson attempts, and murders aimed at the club members because of it being a gay/bi club. Now I sit in prison because of blatant discrimination against me and my choice of sexual difference. The one story that touched my heart and broke it as well was by David Trevino, "My Story While I Sit in this Seg Cell." I too am sitting in Seg, though not because of my sexual preference, but because I speak out against the atrocious, hostile, abusive, and degrading conditions of this facility and staff. This began June 6th 2010.

I feel I was singled out by staff because my birthday was on the 11th, and I've made it no secret I grew up in Sarajevo, Bosnia. I wrote a letter to an old friend describing what happened during the Serbian Convention of Ethnic Cleansing through the early 90's in which my entire family was massacred because of Islamic practice. I guess word got out and I was going to class when this Sgt. began to taunt and degrade me as I had been accustomed to. However, this time he went beyond senseless instigation, he said "Yeah your family got what they deserved." I walked toward him, then another inmate said "Tweek he's not worth it, God will take care of him." So I turned around and tried to walk away when he grabbed me, and I then pulled away in return, but he pulled me by my shirt, pushed me into the windows, and slammed me onto the floor where I hit my head on the podium. Then three other officers ran in the school house. A male officer kicked me in the back, arms, and head numerous times. When I tried to get up I was hit in the head with a mace can. I was left in the hallway to bleed on the floor for about 10 minutes before being taken to the infirmary. At the entrance I was pushed into the wall, further opening up my head injury. In the end, I had numerous bruises and cuts and received staples to close the wound. At the hearing for the "assault on an officer" case, I showed the Capt. my bruises I received. As punishment, he put me in solitary 15 days and that was it. I get visits every other week and being in solitary I was denied my visit so I couldn't show my mom my bruises. After I healed I was allowed visits. Sadly this is not the only abuse I have suffered over the last months. In Seg I have been physically and psychologically tortured, spit on, degraded, denied food, clothes, showers, my mail is held for weeks and some I never receive. I received word of another case after the hearing was over. Coincidentally the same Capt who mistreated me before was the hearing officer on this one too; only this time not only did an officer lie on me, but my "signature" was forged for the hearing in which I wasn't even present for! Since that case numerous officers continue to psychologically torture me. One exposed himself to me and asked me to touch him when I went to shower. When he works I refuse to shower out of fear of him sexually assaulting me. I had decided the only way to get help in my situation is to self-sacrifice. As of 8/13/10, I am beginning a hunger strike to peacefully protest both my excessive and malicious hate-based sentence and the torture I face everyday on this unit. This will last until I am granted a pardoned release, secure council to fight my case, or die from malnutrition/lack of medical care. [The names of specific officers were removed from this writing by B&P to help prevent retaliation towards Tweek] [Images below are of Bosnia and Herzegovina.]

Sincerely,
John Kincaid aka Tweek



Love for James

Hi, My name is James aka Jazmine or Junior, and I'm currently incarcerated within the Dept. of Correction in Florida. My family has given up on me. So I'm a 22 y.o. homosexual all by myself and I've been really depressed because I'm trying to go back to court and get my life together, but I ain't got no support . Then the other dudes and police be putting me down to the point that I'm crying. So I'm just trying to find some support, please.

Black & Pink says: We care about you James!

Kitty Doesn't Tolerate Disrespect

To my extended family at Black & Pink:

I received the most recent newsletter today, and a personalized card was enclosed from, I believe the name is Sarah! Just making me aware that she had run into so many kind people on the bus that day and how the world, was in fact, filled with kindness. And it just really uplifted my spirit. Then I read the stories of Alison Thomas, Toni, and David Trevino. Thank you three so much for your testimonies. I can relate to you all and what you are going through. As I have gone through it all too.

Please be advised that my name is Kitty and I am a pre-operative transsexual currently incarcerated at the Eastern N.Y. Correctional Facility. I went to Riker's Island back in the very early 80's. At that time, there was "homosexual housing" available to people who chose to be there. For so many years, my offenses were petty so I was always in and out so to speak. But I always went to "gay housing". And it was always a reunion of sorts, unfortunately for all of us City Girls. They closed that down in 2005. But I always was able to go to any population house there.

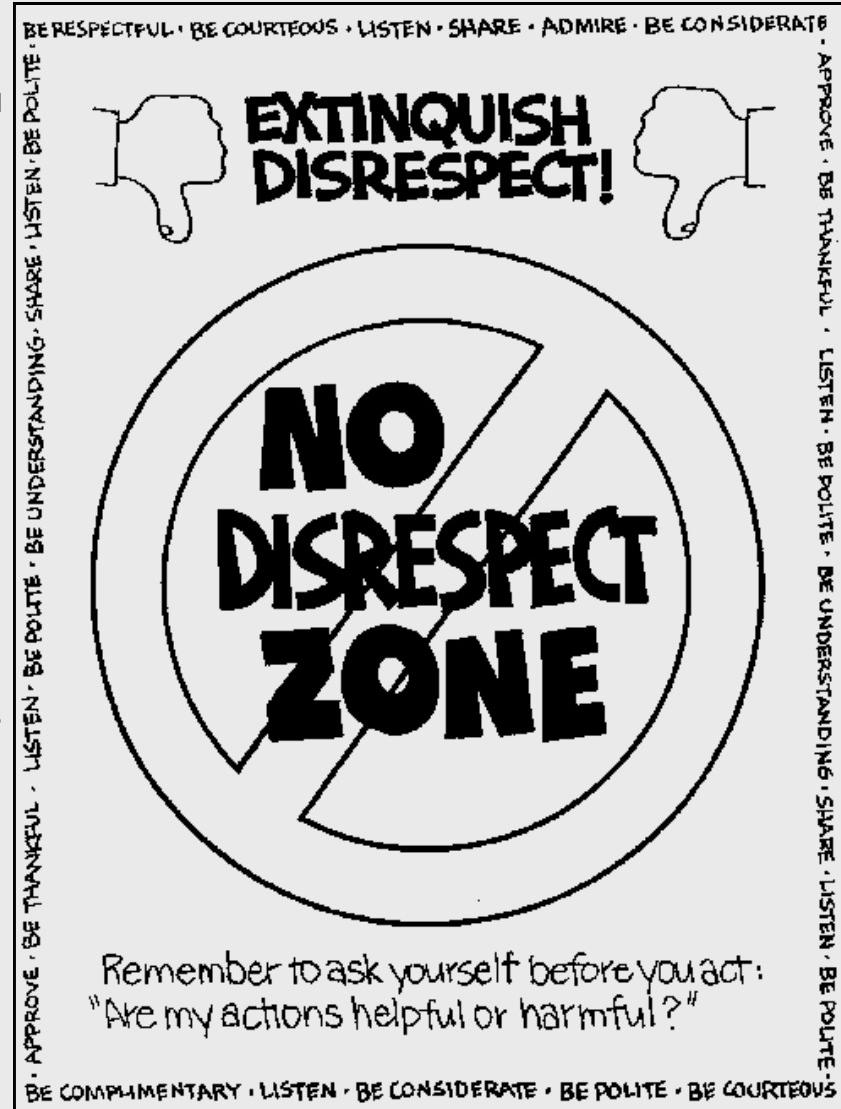
In 1993 at the age of 29, I was sentenced to 4-8 years in a State Penitentiary. And due to my own behavior, I was sentenced three more times to periods of incarceration in the state. A 1½-3, 2-4 and a 2½ -5. That's a total of 10 yrs minimum and 20 max. I have been to the most horrendous of prisons. Attica. Clinton. Elmira. Auburn. And etc., etc!

I've been a victim of verbal abuse. Pranks that can really hurt one's feelings, as well as one's mental stability. Ignorant people standing 20 feet behind me in the mess hall so that they do not have to sit next to me. And the list goes on and on.

But one thing that I do not tolerate in any way, shape, or form is disrespect. Because we are dealing with a religious newsletter here, I dare not mention any of those words that we all know too well. I give them a fair warning the first time. And the second time is on them.

I do not condone violence. But if applied properly, with a set of rules, and in the right arena, I know that it definitely gets the message across. And I've had many of them. And I haven't lost one yet. So ladies, hold your head high. And always be proud of what and who you are.

-Kitty



Lost Life

I lost my life and I ran away from it
 Now reality has 2 say it
 I'm left 2 pay for it
 All I can do is pray 4 it
 I scream at "God" hey
 Guide me through this ugly dream
 What once was strawberries and cream
 Is now a lonely soul without a team
 I struggle 2 hold back the stream my tears make
 Masking all my fears, unnecessary jeers, negative cheers
 Where are all my positive peers
 If only I hadn't most my life
 So much stress and strife
 All because I didn't know how 2 live my life,
 Despite the fact I made the choice
 I ignored the voice
 "Be careful slow down"
 Instead I had to prove I was down
 Now I'm left feeling like a clown
 Inside this bigoted town
 Where everyday all I get is a frown
 All because I lost my life and ran

-Alison



Casualties of War

As I approach the barricade
 Where's the enemy? Who do I invade?
 Bullets of Teflon, bulletproof vest rip
 Tear yo outta ya frame with a bag full of clips
 Cause I got a family that waits for my return
 To get back home is my main concern
 I'ma get back to Philly in one piece
 But I'm bent in the sand that is hot as the city streets
 Sky lights up like fireworks blind me
 Bullets whistlin over my head remind me
 President Obama said: attack
 Flashback to Nam, I might not make it back
 Missile hits the area, screams wake me
 From a war of dreams, heat up the M-16
 Basic training, trained for torture
 Take no prisoners and I just caught-cha
 Addicted to murder, send more bodybags
 They can't identify 'em, leave the name tags
 I get a rush when I see blood, dead bodies on the floor
 Casualties of War!
 -Joseph Barnes



Make Black & *Pink* More Accountable to YOU!

Where we came from:

Black and *Pink* began in its original form as a personal project of Jason. After he got out of prison Jason wanted to remain connected to the people he met and who looked out for him while he was incarcerated. Jason was also incredibly angry about being sexually assaulted by a prison guard and wanted to be sure that others who experienced similar things could get support. Jason began writing with and advocating for a couple of prisoners in Massachusetts. The number of prisoners writing letters began to grow and they began writing in from places beyond Massachusetts. Soon Jason had nearly 30 personal pen-pals who he was trying to be friends with as well as advocate for a number of them.

After some time of trying to manage the project alone Jason invited a few friends over to a dinner to help respond to some letters. This soon became a monthly gathering of people to write letters to prisoners. Another person offered to make Jason a website to list prisoners who were seeking pen-pals. The first Black and *Pink* newsletter was sent out to 75 prisoners in November of 2007. This led to far more queer and transgender prisoners writing for support and pen-pals. There was a short time attempt to transform Black and *Pink* into a project specifically focused on sexual violence in prison and five individuals came to a number of meetings but as Jason was the only formerly incarcerated person and only survivor of prison sexual violence it was decided that was not the best direction for the organization. The individuals involved in that group went separate ways but the potluck monthly letter writing events continued to grow. In time Ian and Reed became the other two primary volunteers who make Black and *Pink* what it is today.

Where we are:

Right now, Black & *Pink* is mostly run by three volunteers, with several other people helping out as well. We have monthly get-togethers in Boston, Massachusetts, where 5-20 people come together and write letters, get pen-pals, and help with the newsletter mailing. We open your letters, post your bios on the pen-pal website on the internet, set up a table at events to connect with people, put together a monthly newsletter made up mostly of your submissions, and promote and sell your art for your benefit.

We believe that "The United States is a prison empire, founded on the legacy of slavery, which uses racist mass incarceration, widespread criminalization, torture and the targeting of political dissidents to try to solve its fundamental economic and social problems. It locks up more people than any other country on the planet. The prison system is a central node in an apparatus of state repression; it destroys our communities and weakens our resistance and movements for justice. Repression is a tool used to maintain state power, and the prison population represents the most oppressed sectors of society: people of color, the poor, First Nations communities, immigrant communities, working class women, queer and transgender people, and radical organizers from many communities. Because we share a vision of justice and solidarity against confinement, control, and all forms of political repression, the prison industrial complex must be abolished." [From the Resolution by the US Social Forum Anti-Prison People's Movement Assembly, 6/24/10, where hundreds of anti-prison activists got together recently in Detroit].

Continued from page 6:

The Prison-Industrial Complex includes prisons and jails, the police, immigration enforcement, courts, military, prison-related corporations, schools set up to fail students, and other institutions. The prison system furthers white supremacy/racism, poverty and classism, heterosexism/homophobia, patriarchy/male supremacy, fascism, environmental destruction, and other oppressive systems. Prisons create more violence and harm, rather than help people heal; they rip apart communities, rather than build community power; they do not effectively stop people from hurting other people.

We can build systems of justice, called "restorative" or "transformative," that can better serve us all, including: survivors of domestic violence, partner abuse, and hate violence, and people who are abusive; people who use or sell substances considered illegal; people who commit "crimes" out of poverty; families of people who are killed or experienced violence, and people who have done terrible things they wish they didn't. We can create systems that make us safer and are actually effective at reducing poverty, inequality, and violence in our communities.

At Black & Pink, we work to make life better for queer, transgender, and gender non-conforming people in prison, support efforts to create alternatives to the current system, and in the longer term (but as soon as possible) work to end the prison-industrial complex.

Where we want to go:

We want everyone who desires a pen-pal to have one, but don't have enough people in the 'free world' to make this happen yet- we are open to ideas to getting more people to write with everyone behind bars. We want advocate for you all, and help enable you to advocate for yourselves, though at the moment we don't have enough people to take on all requests. We want to create a community of queer and trans people behind bars and allies to break the isolation people experience, to offer emotional support and healing, to challenge each other, and to build political power together.

We are especially excited by projects and efforts at change that are lead by the people most impacted by the forces we struggle against- the Prison-Industrial Complex, Heterosexism, Racism/White Supremacy, Sexism/Patriarchy, Classism/Capitalism, Ableism and all systems of oppression. We believe efforts to end oppressive systems, and create a world where people are free from violence and able to make decisions about their own lives, are most effective when they are lead by or accountable to the people who know those systems and have that personal experience and political analysis.

We want to make sure Black & Pink is accountable to queer and trans people who are in jail or prison, and formerly incarcerated people. We want to create a way to do this, and need your ideas. One example could be: establishing a group of people in jail/prison or recently released who sign up to be leaders, and who act as advisers or hold most of the decision-making power in Black & Pink. There are real challenges to this, so we need to figure out exactly how this will work.

We Need You!:

We need people to give suggestions about what it means and what it can look like for Black & Pink to be accountable to the people most affected by the Prison System. We especially need queer and transgender people, people of color, people with low-incomes, people with disabilities, immigrants/migrants and people without "official" documentation to be leaders in this.

What do you think? Where do you see yourself in this movement? How could Black & Pink be lead by the people most affected by the prison system?

Please share your ideas using the form on the next page, Page 7!



Black & Pink Mail-In Idea Form

Please share your thoughts and ideas about the newsletter:

Please share your thoughts and ideas about the pen-pal program:

Please share your thoughts and ideas about the art program:

Please share your thoughts and ideas about other important ways B & P could offer support:

Please share your thoughts and ideas about how Black & Pink can be led by GLBTQ prisoners:

Please mail this page to: Black & Pink– Developing Leadership (see page 10 for full address)

California legislature passes bill protecting LGBT prisoners

San Diego Gay & Lesbian News 8/25/2010

SACRAMENTO – The California State Senate today passed the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Prisoner Safety Act, AB 633, in a 26-9 vote. Sponsored by Equality California and introduced by Assemblymember Tom Ammiano, D-San Francisco, the bill is designed to prevent violence against LGBT people in the state prison system. “All people deserve basic protections — including those serving time in our state prisons,” Ammiano said. “No prisoner should fear for his or her life or be the target of abuse because of his or her sexual orientation or gender identity.”

“Too often, lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender prisoners are the victims of violence behind bars,” said Geoff Kors, executive director of Equality California. “This important bill would help prevent brutal assaults against prisoners who are targeted due to their sexual orientation or gender identity.”

The bill would require California to adopt the National Prisoner Rape Elimination Commission Standards, which were created by a bipartisan panel that studied the issue nationally. It would amend the Sexual Abuse in Detention Elimination Act (SADEA) of 2005 to include self-reported safety concerns related to sexual orientation and gender identity on the list of factors for consideration when classifying and housing prisoners. This list of factors currently includes age, type of offense and prior time served. The bill would also save the state money due to decreased litigation and healthcare expenses.

A recent study from the California Department of Corrections and Rehabilitation (CDCR) found that 67 percent of LGBT inmates report being sexually assaulted by another inmate, a rate 15 times higher than the overall prison population. Another study by UC Irvine and commissioned by CDCR found that 69 percent of transgender inmates reported sexual victimization while incarcerated.

AB 633 was developed following a Senate Public Safety Committee meeting held in San Francisco in December 2008 that was chaired by Senator and former Majority Leader Gloria Romero, D-Los Angeles. The meeting, which was sponsored by Equality California along with Just Detention International, the Transgender Law Center, the National Center for Lesbian Rights and the Transgender, Gender Variant and Intersex Justice Project, exposed the dire issues facing LGBT people in California prisons in order to produce concrete solutions. Previously approved by the State Assembly, the bill now heads to the governor’s office, which vetoed a similar bill last year.

Black & Pink Says:

The LGBT Prisoner Safety Act is essentially a change in the classification system for prisoners. It is absolutely essential for prisoners to be as safe as possible while incarcerated and we applaud the efforts of grassroots organizations such as the Transgender, Gender Variant and Intersex Justice Project for their work to raise awareness about the experience of queer and trans prisoners behind bars. However, classification is an incredibly limited aspect to the safety of prisoners. There is nothing about disciplining prison guards for their assaults on prisoners, even though it is well known that prison guards are regularly the ones who cause assaults or allow assaults to happen. Reforming classification systems can only make prisoners as safe as the prison itself is and in a state that allows county jails to use heat ray guns (Los Angeles) on prisoners, the victory of classification reforms should be met with little excitement but rather a strong commitment to continue pushing the bar further. Real safety is when the walls are torn down and when prisoners are given the tools they need to protect themselves against anyone taking advantage of them, prisoners or guards alike.

QWOC+ Week Events Success!

Media Arts Night and Activism & Karaoke Night!

The first week of August brings the fantastic Queer Women of Color and Friends (QWOC+) Multicultural Pride Week alive in Boston! Each day has an interesting, thought-provoking, community-building event. Black & Pink was happy for the invitation to collaborate and build new networks, educate, and recruit new volunteers!



On Monday August 2nd, "OUT OF THE BOX: Media and Literary Artists Studio" took place at a renovated fire station in East Boston which is now an affordable youth music center. Vicky C. and Reed were on hand to sell some amazing art from the Black & Pink Art collection! Also, a slideshow of the scanned images was shown.



On that Wednesday, we took over a gay karaoke club in Back Bay. Tables were covered with B&P stickers and pens, newsletters were folded and stuffed, and a total of \$170 of art was sold! We recruited nearly 60 new pen-pals, and people had a blast singing to their favorite tunes! Given the success of these events, we plan to work with QWOC+ in the future!!!

Spice Grrls ReMix!

Yo, I'll tell you what I want, what I really really want
(So tell me what you want, what you really really want)

Chorus 1:

I'll tell you what I want, what I really really want
(So tell me what you want, what you really really want)

I wanna **fight** I wanna **grow** I wanna **dance** I wanna **fuck** I wanna really
really wanna **revolution**

If you want a future can't forget the past
If you wanna **beat oppression** better have a blast
Now don't go wasting this precious time
Get your act together and don't toe the line

Chorus 1

Chorus 2:

If you wanna beat the system, you
gotta go make some friends
Sign up for a pen pal the friendship
never ends

If you wanna beat the system, you
have got to give
Taking is too easy, but that's the
way it is

Whatcha think about that now you
know how I feel
Say you're a **freedom fighter** are
you for real
I won't be hasty, I'll give you a try
If you **can't check your privilege**
then I'll say goodbye



Chorus 1

Chorus 2

So here's a story from A to Z
you wanna change the world you gotta listen carefully
We got laws in place that slam kids on their face
we got media see that spin things crazy
policy doesn't change easy, police brutality
and as for me, ah you'll see,
Bust the prisons down and spread the love around x2

Chorus 2

If you wanna beat the system, you gotta, you gotta, you gotta,
you gotta, you gotta slam, slam, slam, slam
Bust the prisons down and spread the love around x3
Bust the prisons down in revolution

If you wanna beat the system!

-Written and performed by Alex K. (above)

BLACK & PINK ART



Paintings by Richard Young

SEND NEWSLETTER SUBMISSIONS TO: **BLACK AND PINK- NEWSLETTER**

SEND PEN-PAL REQUESTS TO: **BLACK AND PINK- PEN PAL**

SEND ART RELATED LETTERS TO: **BLACK AND PINK ART- REED MILLER**

SEND IDEAS FOR THE GROUP TO: **BLACK & PINK- DEVELOPING LEADERSHIP**

**THANK
YOU SO
MUCH!**

C/O COMMUNITY CHURCH OF BOSTON
565 BOYLSTON ST
BOSTON, MA 02116

CAN YOU WRITE TO OTHER PRISONERS?

Introducing the trial P2P (Prisoner to Prisoner) List

We recognize that many of you would like to write one or more pen-pals, and that some of you have been waiting for a while to make that connection. We know that many people can get in trouble for writing with other prisoners, and we sure don't want to get you in trouble by accident. We suggest checking with the mailroom, prison policy handbook, prison officials, or wherever makes sense for you, before you sign up for this separate prisoner-to-prisoner list, which involves writing to and receiving mail from other people in prison.

Please tear off this slip and mail to:

Black & Pink-P2P List, Community Church of Boston, 565 Boylston St, Boston MA 02116

Name _____

Number _____

Address _____

Ad about yourself (write neatly plz!) _____
